

Loránd Eötvös Scientific University, Faculty of Pedagogy and Psychology

**Theses of the Doctoral dissertation**

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**ASSESSMENT OF THE COUPLE RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION IN A  
SYSTEMIC FRAMEWORK**

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## **1. PROBLEM BACKGROUND OF THE RESEARCH**

The subject of couple psychology has assumed an increasingly prominent position in both domestic and international research. It is indisputable that a well-functioning, long-time marriage and harmonic family life are essential (Campbell, 1981), not only for individual happiness, but also for the family unit (and in addition, for the economy, health insurance and the society as well). A couple relationship that ensures lasting satisfaction significantly contributes to the healthy bodily and emotional development of members living in the family, since it is the factor that creates, maintains and defines family cohabitation (Goldenberg, Goldenberg, 2008). The development of forms of family cohabitation are caused by changes in couple relationship to a significant extent. A happy and satisfied couple relationship is able to ensure maintenance of the beneficial functioning of the family unit, while an unhappy, dissatisfied and dysfunctional couple relationship may result in family cohabitation ridden with lasting conflicts, or even in divorce (Chay, Zarei, Pour, 2014).

Any stuckness in the functioning of couple relationships can be relatively easily described by the concepts of the structural family therapy school and can be modified by the transformation of the structure. However, the structural family therapy approach focusing on interpersonal relationships does not provide a long-term solution for every problem related to couple relationships. From a therapeutic point of view, in order to release the stuckness affecting or arising from couple relationships it may be necessary (Minuchin, 2005), in addition to the exploration of the structural features registered in the present, to know the intrapsychic characteristics of both persons constituting the couple, and within that, their individual past (Amatoo és Booth, 2001). According to the experiences of the author, the boundaries, the subsystems, the hierarchy are influenced, on the one hand, by the adult attachment patterns, on the other hand, by the contents of the cognitive structures controlling the thinking of persons living in couple relationships, together with self-esteem. The high level of similarity between childhood and adulthood attachment patterns enables us to explore the origin of the adult attachment patterns registered in the present (Hazan, Shaver, 1987; Hadházi, Vargha, 2010). The cognitive contents are incorporated into the cognitive structures of the child primarily through the verbal expressions of the parents and determine (Young et al, 2010), also later in life, the interpretation and incorporation of the information coming from various sources concerning the child himself (Collins és Read, 1990; Mikulincer és Shaver, 2003), his environment, future and relationships with others (Tringer, Mórotz 1985). The triad of the safety/uncertainty of the relationship, the selection of information coming from the outside

world and self-esteem, also rooted in childhood (Satir, Banmen, Gerber, Gömöri 2006), jointly determine in the adult couple relationship the boundaries separating the individual subsystems, the cohesion to be measured in the couple relationship and, as a response to changes, the measure of flexibility. These show a correlation with the measure of satisfaction of men and women living in couple relationships about their couple relationships, the measure of closeness and flexibility between spouses. *The roots of stuckness registered in the present in couple relationships are often to be found in uncertain patterns of attachment that affect lasting relationships and are activated in stressful situations (Bartholomew and Horowitz, 1991), as well as in maladaptive schemes that significantly affect thinking and through that, feelings (Unoka, 2004), and in low self-esteem (Rosenberg, 1965; Johnson, 2008).* It is with this integrative approach that I applied to assess the issue of satisfaction in couple relationships, primarily focusing on the structural family therapy school built on the foundations of the systemic approach, within the object relationship family therapy approach, attachment theory, furthermore, the approach of schema therapy developed from the cognitive therapeutic approach.

The assessment of the couple relationship, understanding of its working, is important for me for the feasibility of a satisfied and enduring family cohabitation having its roots in couple relationship.

## **2.THEORETICAL BACKGROUND OF THE RESEARCH**

In the literature the quality of marriage has been described using concepts of happiness, harmony, satisfaction and adaptation. The term *couple relationship satisfaction* is used for the general, comprehensive assessment of marriage, which indicates (Kurdek and Schmitt, 1986; Hinde, 1997) the extent to which individual needs, expectations and desires are satisfied in marriage, and is a strong indicator of the length, success and stability of the relationship (Anderson and Emmers-Sommer 2006). Although couple relationship satisfaction is a subjective indicator, since the two parties in the relationship may assess satisfaction with the marriage differently (Bagdy and Telkes, 1986), furthermore, it is exposed to the impact of several factors simultaneously, therefore the results of the measurement should rather be interpreted as guidance, I still seek to assess it.

Salvador Minuchin (1985), father of structural family therapy, considers the family a system operating in a defined social environment, which can be characterized by three major attributes.

(1) The family has a structure characteristic of an open socio-cultural system in transformation; (2) it undergoes various stages of development, which requires recurring restructuring, furthermore, (3) it adapts to the changing environmental conditions, in order to maintain its continuity and ensure the psychosocial development of its members.. The family system consists of and performs its functions through *subsystems*. In my research, of the subsystems of individuals, spouses, children and parents, I examine the individual and spousal subsystems.

Subsystems within the family are sided by *borders* varying according to permeability, which determines the measure of closeness that may be experienced within the subsystems. The function of the borders is to ensure the differentiation of the system compared to other systems and subsystems (Kurimay, 2001). Olson, Stewart, Wilson (1991) created the Circumplex model showing a large overlap with the structural family therapy approach, the purpose of which was to establish a bridge between the theory and practice of family therapy research (Kisgyörgyné, Pongrácz, Mirnics, Bagdy, et al. 2006). Olson (2000) also interprets the family as a complex system, a dynamically changing unit. According to his model (Olson, 1995), a system in balance, within that the couple relationship subsystem can be characterized by a high level of cohesion, flexibility, open and rich communication and successful problem solving, which generates a higher level of well-being and satisfaction. In my research I have defined couple relationship satisfaction in the context of structural elements.

In addition to structural attributes, couple relationship satisfaction is also related to other factors. Gödri (2001) identified those variables according to *objective* and *subjective* aspects that affect the satisfaction of the couple relationship. I took this classification as a starting point when I grouped the variables that I wanted to measure, supplementing this with new aspects. In my research, in order to explore the couple relationship subsystem, I have examined, in addition to demographic data characteristic of the individual subsystems constituting the spousal subsystem, the personality type of the individuals constituting the couple, the measure of the anxious and depressive moods characterizing them, the coping methods, the measure of self-esteem, within the framework of the object relationship theory, the attachment style, and concerning the schema theory, the pattern of maladaptive schemas determining thinking. I have assessed couple relationship satisfaction not only as an output variable, but also in the Investment Model of Rusbult (Rusbult, Martz, Agnew, 1998), as the input variable of the commitment predicting lasting relationships, together with the characteristics of investment and alternatives outside the relationship. The verification of my own hypothetical model constitutes a central part of my research, in which, in addition to structural variables, the triad of attachment style, maladaptive schemas and self-esteem also have an important role.

### 3. EMPIRICAL ASSESSMENT

#### 3.1. The objectives and structure of the examination

The general aim of the examination constituting the subject of this thesis is to provide an integrative type definition of couple relationship satisfaction from several aspects, through the exploration of its predictive factors, in a systemic framework. The cross-sectional research was made up of three parts.

1) In the *first part* we focused on members of the couple as individuals and as a couple. The differences between the demographic and psychological variables of men and women constituting the couple relationship have been identified, then we examined the correlation of the couple relationship satisfaction of the given spouse and the closely related structural and psychological characteristics of his/her own with the spouse's own demographic and psychological attributes, then in comparison to the demographic and psychological attributes of the partner of the spouse. The assessment persons under examination in couples constitutes part of this chapter, by the calculation of joint indicators. We have created the joint indicators by the split up of the individual indicators according to category, which enables, in addition to the exploration of the relations, the observation of the patterns of the relationship.

Following the argumentation of the theoretical chapter, the demographic and psychological attributes have been assigned to the following groups:

- *Individual objective aspects*: age, income, education;
- *Individual subjective attributes*: personality trait, depression/anxiety, coping style;
- *Joint objective aspects*: relationship status, number of years since first meeting, cohabitation in years, existence of children, number of common children, family life cycle;
- *Joint subject attributes*: cohesion, flexibility, open communication experienced in the relationship, successful problem-solving, stress level, commitment, measure of investment, quality of alternatives experienced outside the relationship;
- *Objective aspect from the family of origin*: divorce of parents;

- *Subjective aspects from the family of origin:* self-esteem, attachment style, maladaptive schemas.

The classification of the aspects and attributes was arbitrary. Naturally, the subjective attributes stemming from the family of origin could also be assigned to the group of individual subjective attributes, however, by this split up I wanted to make an effort to emphasize the role of the family of origin.

2) In the *second part* we tested, in the individual men and women model of couple relationship satisfaction in an integrative approach, among the psychological attributes deemed important based on couple relationship satisfaction and my own experiences, hypothetical relationships. We supplemented this model by a couple relationship satisfaction model, in which we only included, based on the correlations deriving from comparison by couple, only those demographic and psychological variables that are significantly related to couple relationship satisfaction. By this we conducted a mutual examination of the satisfaction of spouses, furthermore, we wanted to find out that if we only place satisfaction into the model without structural features, what will be the number and quality of the relations. In this case, too, we created two models, one model in which we considered the women's variables explaining the couple relationship satisfaction of the husband, furthermore, the men's variables explaining the couple relationship satisfaction of the wife.

3) In the *third chapter* of the empirical part we tested the Investment Model of Rusbult (Rusbult, 1998), explaining the commitment serving as the basis for couple relationships. Before that we also performed the psychometric analysis of the Investment Model Scale (Investment Model of Romantic Associations, Rusbult, 1979) formerly translated into the Hungarian language by Gabriella Nagy and Mrs. Zsuzsanna Kozéki-Hammer (2011). In this model we also implemented the third type of examination, since both the man and the woman was examined within one model, in order to verify the model, in such a manner that we exposed the male and female variables belonging to the model to the examination simultaneously, where couple relationship satisfaction was one of the fundamental elements.

### **3.2. The examination and the process**

We applied convenience sampling to involve in our cross-sectional, questionnaire examination spouses or couples living as life partners, at least 23 years old, living together for at least three years. The subjects of the examination received the questionnaire package

based on a paper- pencil test in a sealed envelope, together with a return envelope, detailed guidance and a statement of approval. In addition to the demographic data form, the questionnaire package included 10 questionnaire, depending on the individual, completion of these questionnaires took about 2 hours. Participation in the research was voluntary and anonymous. Data were collected from February 2013 until June 2013. Details of 160 couples, i.e. 320 persons were processed.

### **Subjects**

The average age of the men is 39.5 years (SD=11.22) that of women is 37.5 years (SD=10.59). Concerning education, 62.3% of the husbands and 75.0% of the wives are college or university graduates. Concerning their relationship status, 31.9% of the polled couples live in life partnership and 68.1% are married. Calculated from the responses of wives on average the couples have known each other for 18.1 years (SD=11.31 years, scope: 3–54 years), and have lived together for 14.6 years on average (SD=10.56 years, scope: 3–53 years). In the case of married couples the marriage was celebrated 16.7 years ago on average (SD=10.97 years, Scope: 0.5–53 years).

### **Measuring tools**

*Big Five Inventory – Shortened version of 44 items* (Costa and McCrae, 1992); *Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale* (Rosenberg, 1965); *Contingent Self-assessment Inventory* (Johnson and Blom, 2006); *Spielberger's- Strait-Trait Anxiety Inventory* (Spielberger, 1970); *Beck Depression Inventory – shortened version* (Beck, 1972); *Coping Method Inventory, shortened version* (Folkman, Lazarus, 1980); *Young's Schema inventory shortened version* (Young et al., 2010); *Investment Model Scale* (Rusbult et al, 1998); *Coping and Stress Profile* (Olson, Stewart and Wilson, 1991).

## **4.MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE RESEARCH**

### **4.1. Results of the couple comparison**

*Results of the comparison of individual objective variables and couple relationship satisfaction by couple*

The age, the number of years spent together, the existence and number of children, income, education and relationship status correlate with couple relationship satisfaction and the structural attributes of the relationship - such as cohesion, flexibility, communication, problem

solving and stress level - in ways that are somewhat different for men and women. *In the case of husbands* ( $r/rs=|0,16-0,27|$ ,  $p<0,05$ ), the older the man, the longer the time, measured in years, he has lived together with his wife, the longer the time they have known each other, the older the wife and the more income the wife has, the less the man feels close to his wife, the more rigid he is, the more closed the way is that he communicates, the less successful problem solver he is and the more stress he experiences in his relationship. According to my results, men with no children or a small number of children are more satisfied with their couple relationship, compared to men with children or a higher number of children. *In the case of women*, the number of years spent together, the age of the spouse correlate in a way similar to men with their couple relationship satisfaction or any structural attribute ( $r/rs=|0,16-0,35|$ ,  $p<0,05$ ). In addition, it is an interesting finding that in the case of the wives the existence of children only correlates with a more closed style of communication. Also, those women who have children experience less stress in their relationship compared to those who are childless, in contrast with the experiences of men. There is one men's objective variable that is related to the satisfaction of wives, the education of the husband. The higher the education of the husband, the more satisfied the wife is. If the couple has one or more children already, after the birth of the first child they are both more satisfied than in the period of having an adolescent child, and only couples with an adult child are more satisfied than that. The relationship status shows similar correlations for both genders: the closeness and flexibility experienced within the relationship is higher for men and women living in life partnership compared to those living in marriage. The communication and problem-solving of husbands shows a correlation of similar direction with the relationship status. There is no correlation with satisfaction.

#### *Results of the comparison of individual subjective variables and couple relationship satisfaction by couple*

The satisfaction of the man is also related to his own *personality* ( $r/rs=|0,18-0,33|$ ,  $p<0,05$ ) *traits*, while the satisfaction of the women is related, in addition to her own personality traits, with the personality traits of the man, too. The couple relationship satisfaction of men correlates with their own openness, exactitude, friendliness and extroversion, i.e. the more these attributes characterize the man, the more satisfied he is with his relationship. The satisfaction of women is related to some of their own personality traits ( $r/rs=|0,18-0,32|$ ,  $p<0,05$ ): the more friendly and more emotionally dependable they are, the higher their satisfaction is. The satisfaction of the wife is exposed to the personality traits of her husband, since the exactitude, friendliness and



extroversion of the husband shows a relationship of positive direction with the satisfaction, feeling of closeness and flexibility of the wife.

The *anxiety and depression mood* of the men ( $r/rs=|0,36-0,49|$ ,  $p<0,001$ ), [KZ1] and the anxiety depression mood of the women ( $r/rs=|0,28-0,38|$ ,  $p<0,05$ ) are uniformly related to the couple relationship satisfaction of their own partner and the structural attributes thereof. For both genders, the more intensive the level of trait anxiety and the mood of depression, the lower couple relationship satisfaction, feeling of closeness, flexibility, openness of communication, success of problem-solving are, and the higher the level of stress experienced in the relationship concerning satisfaction with themselves and the couple relationship satisfaction of the spouses is.

When assessing the *coping style*, we have found that the problem-focused coping style of the men is positively related to their own satisfaction, however, his emotional coping style shows a negative correlation with the satisfaction of the wife. ( $r/rs=|0,18-0,21|$ ,  $p<0,05$ ). The coping style of the wife does not show correlation with her own couple relationship satisfaction or the structural attributes thereof, however, the emotionally driven action of the male partner negatively impacts the communication and problem-solving of the wife.

#### *Results of the comparison of joint subjective variables and couple relationship satisfaction by couple*

The *structural variables* show a significant correlation for both genders with the couple relationship satisfaction of their own and that of the partner: there is a relation in positive direction with cohesion, flexibility, communication, problem solving, and a relation in negative direction with stress (férfiak:  $r/rs=|0,45-0,76|$ , nők:  $r/rs=|0,56-0,82|$ ).

When creating joint indicators, we have found that those couples where both of them feel themselves distant from their partner, and those where both parties are rigid, mostly experienced dissatisfaction in their relationships. Those couples that can be characterized by converging closeness or optimal flexibility are approximately satisfied, dissatisfied and different (discrepant) regarding satisfaction in about the same ratios. It is those couples who can be characterized with merged cohesion or excessive flexibility that mainly experience satisfaction, and finally, couples that are heterogeneous in terms of closeness or flexibility are rather dissatisfied than satisfied or discrepant regarding satisfaction. It is a surprising finding that only about one-third of all couples who can be characterized with optimal cohesion or optimal flexibility are uniformly satisfied with their relationships, on the other hand, it is the group of intertwined couples and those characterized with excessive flexibility that feel the highest level

of satisfaction. According to the insight of Olson (2000), it only poses a problem when cohesion or flexibility shifts towards one or the other extreme direction which a member of the couple or family is dissatisfied. However, it is important to note that in the families of psychiatric patients the excessive permeability and chaotic nature of the borders (lack of consistency and safety) is a natural phenomenon in the functioning of the family and often does not correlate with the feeling of dissatisfaction or awareness of illness, which is one of the traits of psychiatric disease.

*Results of the comparison of subjective variables stemming from the family of origin and couple relationship satisfaction by couple*

In the case of men *global self-esteem* shows a positive ( $r/rs=|0,17-0,38|$ ,  $p<0,05$ ), ( $r/rs=|0,18-0,28|$ ,  $p<0,05$ ), while the relationship-based and performance-based self-esteem a negative correlation with couple relationship satisfaction and the structural traits of the relationship. In both cases correlation with stress shows a reverse direction compared to the rest of the findings. In the category of women the same correlation has been found along *global self-esteem*, however, in their category *conditional self-esteem* is less related to couple relationship satisfaction or the structural traits of the relationship. The *global self-esteem* of one member of the couple is related not only to his or her own satisfaction, but also to the satisfaction of his or her partner and the structural traits of his or her relationship. It is an interesting result that the activity of *conditional self-esteem* is less of an indicator of a problem for women, it increases stress to a lesser extent than for men. It can be presumed that there are causes related to socialization and evolution underlying these.

The early childhood is not only the time when the foundations of self-esteem are created, but also when the foundations - through the conveyance of the thinking, worldview, fears, prejudices, experiences of the parents - of the structure of the thinking of the child, its most fundamental schemes, and the primary and secondary beliefs, attitudes located in the more superficial layers of the cognitive structure, built on the schemes (Stackert and Bursik, 2003), are laid, which apply to the self, the other person, his or her relation and the world (Tringer, 1985).

Considering the schema ranges, we can conclude that the couple relationship satisfaction of men ( $r/rs=|0,21-0,49|$ ,  $p<0,05$ ) and the structural attributes of the relationship show a negative correlation and stress shows a positive correlation with the five maladaptive schema ranges. The maladaptive schema ranges of women ( $r/rs=|0,17-0,32|$ ,  $p<0,001$ ) do not show any relation to the couple relationship satisfaction of men and the structural attributes of their relationships, however, the couple relationship satisfaction and structural constructs of women show a higher

level of correlation with the maladaptive schema range of men. The maladaptive schema ranges of impaired borders, pathological focus on others, on the side of the husband show the most penetrating negative relation with the satisfaction and structural attributes of women.

The *attachment pattern* can also be characterized by development in early childhood, which can also be derived from the primary carer - child relationship. The attachment style provides a framework for the individual to interpret his relationships considered close from the aspect of providing safety (Fónagy, 2003), starting from the primary carer in childhood, all the way to the couple relationship. Our findings imply that the higher level of avoidance and attachment style with anxiety the person can be characterized with (whether it is a man or a woman), the more dissatisfied they are with their relationship, the more distant they feel their partner from themselves, the more flexible they are, the poorer their communication is, the more unsuccessful they are in problem-solving and the more intensive stress they experience in their relationship. (men:  $r/rs=|0,17-0,47|$ ,  $p<0,05$ ), (women:  $r/rs=|0,22-0,37|$ ;  $p<0,05$ ). The couple relationship satisfaction of the man and the structural attributes of his relationships correlate less with the attachment style of the wife than the other way around. This pattern is a recurring motif. The satisfaction of the man does not correlate with the attachment style of his wife, on the other hand, we have demonstrated a negative correlation of his open communication and successful problem-solving and a positive correlation of his experienced stress with the attachment style of the wife. However, the couple relationship satisfaction of the wife correlated with the attachment of the husband: the more the attachment of the men can be characterized by avoiding or anxious style of attachment, the more dissatisfied to the wife is, the more distant she feels herself from her husband, the more rigid she is, the poorer her communication is, the more successful she is in problem solving and the more stress she experiences in their relationship.

Every hypothesis that we formulated concerning comparison in couples has proven to be partially or fully warranted.

In the case of our models we exposed the variables to statistical analyses driven by various aspects. In the case of the first model, such psychological variables are included that are important according to my therapeutic experiences. In our second model, we included from the comparison by couple those variables that have a significant connection with couple relationship satisfaction. We have included the three attributes identified by Rusbult (1998) in the Investment Model, supplemented by a few demographic variables.

In the first model we have applied our calculations separately to men and women, in the second model we correlated the couple relationship satisfaction of the man with the variables of his partner and vice a versa, while in the third model we exposed the variables of men and women simultaneously to the examination.

## **4.2. Results of integrative models**

**4.2.1 Individual integrative model:** *Assessment of the relations of attachment style, maladaptive schema ranges, global self-esteem, the cohesion, flexibility, communication, problem solving, stress level characterizing the relationship, furthermore, couple relationship satisfaction.*

The experiential model is constituted by the mutual relations relation among couple relationship satisfaction and its structural attributes, furthermore, the attachment style incorporated in early childhood, maladaptive schema ranges and self-esteem. In path analysis we treated every psychological variable as a continuous variable, with the exception of attachment, which was added as a dichotomous variable. Of the schema ranges we have incorporated two - Impaired Autonomy and Impaired Borders - into the model. This was motivated by reasons of methodology.

I present the results on charts 1 and 2.

*According to our findings*, in the case of **men** the results yielded by the path model imply that safe attachment correlates with significantly higher global self-esteem and cohesion within relationship, furthermore, a lower level of couple relationship stress than uncertain attachment.

The schema range of Impaired Autonomy is in a positive relation with the level of stress and in a negative relation with the openness of communication. The schema range of Impaired Borders shows a positive correlation with level of stress and self-esteem, and a negative correlation with flexibility within the relationship. The two maladaptive schema ranges are in a positive, significant relation with each other.

*Higher global self-esteem* correlates with lower stress experienced within the relationship.

The level of stress experienced within the relationship is in a negative, significant relation with the cohesion, flexibility characterizing the relationship structure, furthermore, with problem solving and communication.

The *communication style characterizing the relationship* is in a negative relation with the impaired autonomy schema range affecting thinking.

The *age of the husband* and the existence of a common child is positive at tendency level, while the number of years spent with the spouse is also in a tendency-level, but negative relation with the level of stress.

Finally, the closeness *experienced in the relationship* and the success of communication show a positive, significant relation with couple relationship satisfaction. The variables included in the model explain 65.4% of the variance in couple relationship satisfaction.

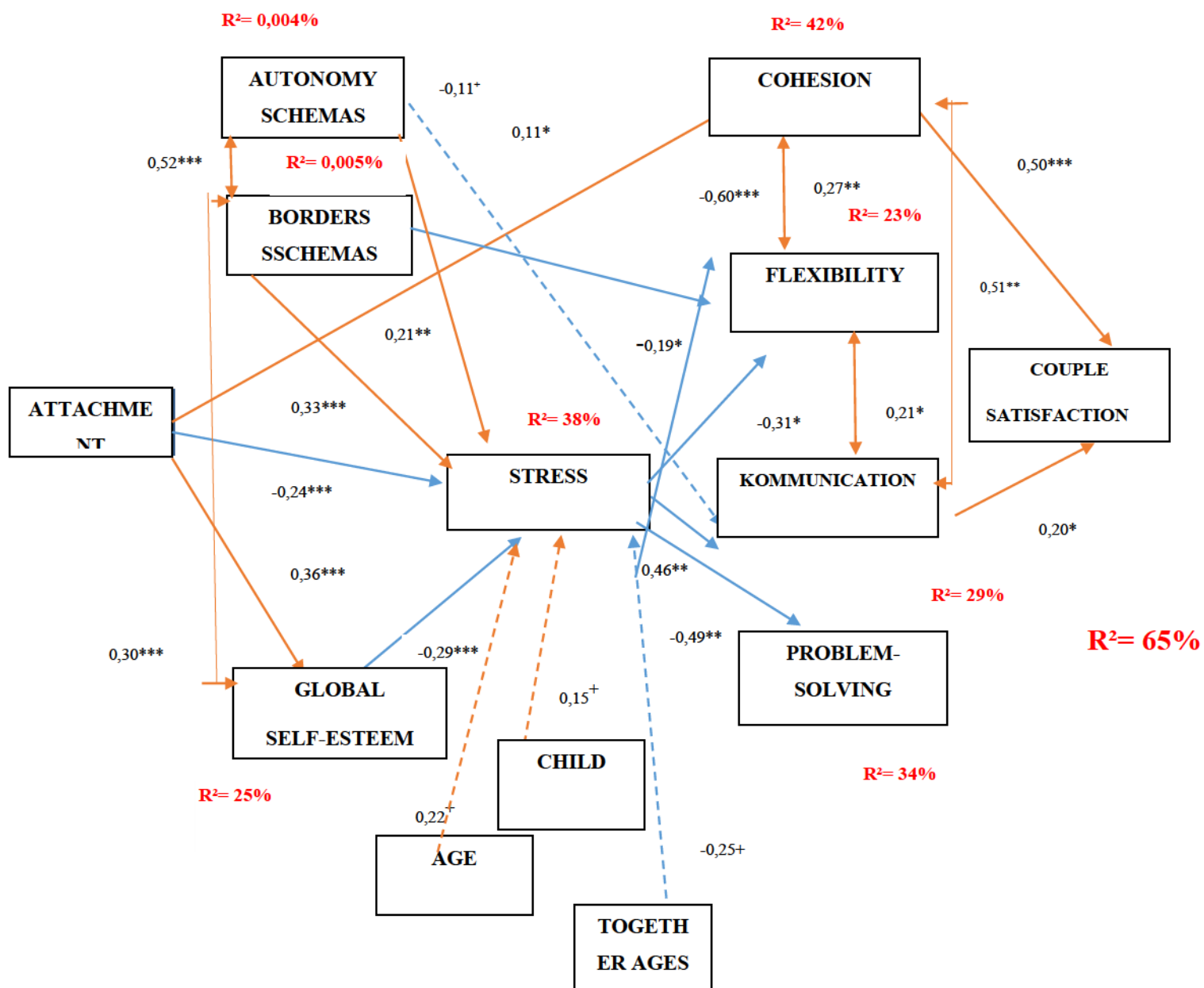


Chart 1. Individual integrative model of Couple satisfaction – men version

In the case of **women** *safe attachment* significantly increases with closeness and self-esteem experienced in the couple relationship, furthermore, it correlates with higher couple relationship satisfaction at tendency level than uncertain attachment.

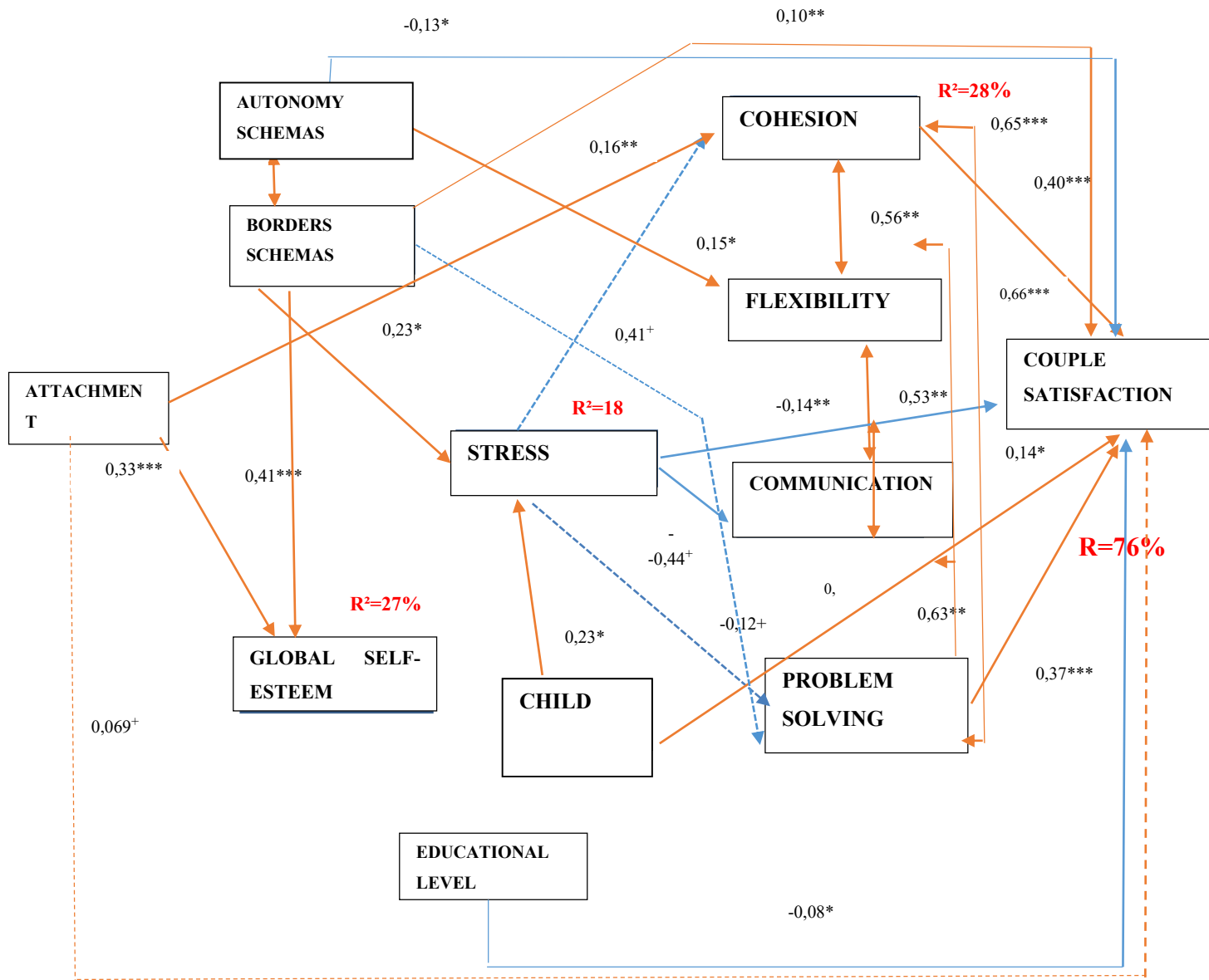


Chart 2. Individual integrative model of Couple satisfaction – woman version

*Impaired Autonomy schema range* is in a direct, negative, significant relation with couple relationship satisfaction, while flexibility within the relationship shows a positive significant relation. The *Impaired Borders schema range* also has an indirect, positive, significant relation with couple relationship satisfaction, stress, global self-esteem, and it is in a tendency-like, negative direction relation with problem-solving. Impaired Autonomy and impaired borders maladaptive schema ranges are in a positive, significant relation with each other.

In the case of *existence of common children* born in the relationship, the couple relationship satisfaction and the level of stress experienced in the relationship is significantly higher than without common children born in the relationship.

The *level of education of women* shows a negative, significant relation with their couple relationship satisfaction.

The *level of stress experienced in the relationship* is in a negative, significant relation with couple relationship satisfaction and the success of communication.

The closeness *experienced by women in the relationship* and problem-solving shows a positive, significant relation with couple relationship satisfaction. The structural attributes within the relationship all show positive, significant relations with one another. The variables included in the model explain 65.4% of the variance in couple relationship satisfaction.

#### **4.2.2. Joint couple relationship satisfaction model**

We have tested the variable explaining the satisfaction of husbands and wives with couple relationship using a multiple linear regression analysis. We wanted to predict the satisfaction of the husband from the data of the wife and the satisfaction of the wife from the data of the husband. We have included in the model those variable that showed a significant linear relation with couple relationship satisfaction as a result of the correlation analyses so far.

According to my results, in the case of the *couple relationship satisfaction of husbands*, only the explaining power of their spouse's couple relationship satisfaction proved to be significant. The higher satisfaction of women correlated with the higher satisfaction of men. At tendency level, the existence of common children born from the couple relationship predicted a lower level of couple relationship satisfaction for men. Undistorted estimation of the variance explained by the model adjusted to the population (adjusted R<sup>2</sup>) is 28.9%.

*In the case of couple relationship satisfaction of wives*, in addition to the satisfaction of their partner with the couple relationship, only the measure of the couple relationship investment perceived by the man had significant explaining power. Undistorted estimation of the variance explained by the model adjusted to the population is 24.5%.

#### **4.2.3. Results of the testing of Rusbult's (1998) Investment Model**

We took the basic concepts of Rusbult (1998) for testing the Investment Model, supplemented by a few demographic considerations. In these examinations we calculated with the results of the couple relationship satisfaction sub-scale in the Rusbult model (1998), which is placed in the model as an input variable.

Considering the data of the spouses simultaneously, it could be demonstrated that the *commitment* of the **husband** was positively and significantly affected by his own couple relationship satisfaction ( $\beta=0,39$ ;  $p<0,001$ ), the measure of his investment, ( $\beta=0,14$ ;  $p=0,017$ ), furthermore, the quality of his wife perceived outside the relationship ( $\beta=0,13$ ;  $p=0,003$ ) while the measure of the investment of his wife ( $\beta=0,14$ ;  $p=0,060$ ), and the age of his wife affected it in a positive direction, but at tendency level ( $\beta=0,23$ ;  $p=0,081$ ).

The measure of the commitment of the wife was in a positive and significant relation with her own couple relationship satisfaction and her own investment, her age and the quality of the alternatives of the husband perceived outside the relationship.

We managed to support a significant part of our hypotheses formulated concerning the models by our research findings.

### **5. The limits of research**

The main limit of the research was, in addition to the accessibility sampling, the layout of cross-sectional research, which does not enable the drawing of causal conclusions.

It reduces the possibility of generalization from the results of the research that in the sample college or university graduates are overrepresented, as are persons with higher than average income.

It may cause a further problem that the package of questionnaires is long, therefore its completion took a lot of time and attention and was probably taxing for the participants. Although we had quite a large sample (a total of 320 persons), in some cases (especially with complex models) owing to the missing data and the high number of data points in certain



sub-groups, the power of the statistics deteriorated significantly. Owing to the low number of data points in certain attachment types we could not perform a more refined analysis.

In the case of continuous variables we often applied median halving for categorization, which is an arbitrary procedure and often cuts the sample into two exactly where we have the most persons. It would have been a good way to use terciles or quartiles instead, however, the number of data points in the sample did not allow that.

Despite the limits, this research also yielded several benefits.

## **6. The significance of research**

One of the important significant findings of our research conducted from multiple aspects and with an integrative approach is that we have assessed couples living in enduring relationships, which also enabled us to map the functioning of relationships in progress.

In addition, it can also be considered a benefit that we involved married couples into our research, which we performed with several theoretical models in the background. The simultaneous assessment of spouses provides much more realistic information on the functioning of couple relationships than research with independent sample.

The multiple types of research arrangements is also significant (comparison by couple, research along joint indicators, testing of the Integrative Model, Couple Relationship Satisfaction Model, Investment Model), since we have tested couple relationship satisfaction and the changes of the structural attributes of the relationship from several aspects. It is another experience that the results of comparison by couple can change (disappear or even change directions) if we expose them to the test simultaneously with several variables. This clearly proves the importance the concept that in a counselling, therapeutic setting we should not highlight one single relation concerning the problem of the client, but rely on the systemic approach and take into account a wider scope of attributes of the micro and macro environment, intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships. With the assistance of all these we can create a more detailed picture of the relationships.

It is an indirect benefit of the assessment that in addition to the expected relations, the sensitivity of the couple relationship satisfaction of women has been proven clearly. The couple relationship satisfaction of wives is related to many more aspects and several attributes of their husbands more strongly determines the development of their satisfaction

than the other way round. The couple relationship satisfaction of men is related to a smaller number of attributes, and even those are rather the aspects of themselves and not their wives'.

Another result that I did not expect is the role that we have assessed couple relationship satisfaction not in itself, rather together with the structural attributes of couple relationship, since by this it became clear that the Coping and Stress Profile, and within that, the Couple Profile (Olson, 1991) satisfaction scale is related to significantly less variables such as cohesion, flexibility, stress, etc. Nevertheless, these structural attributes are directly and strongly related to satisfaction. This kind of research arrangement can also provide a more refined picture of couple relationship satisfaction.

As the last collateral benefit, I would like to mention my experiences formulated concerning the Olson (1991) inventory, i.e. it is not certain that in our culture it can be used for the assessment of the pathological structural attributes of the couple relationship, it is much more suitable for testing the functioning of optimal couple relationship.

This research serves as a starting basis for much future research. I consider testing the triad models of commitment and attachment, maladaptive schemas, self-esteem, as well as the relations of the structural model and the commitment model of primary importance.

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